



Co-operative Councils

Innovation Network

YOUNG PEOPLE



Cardiff Council

Becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City

In October 2023 Cardiff was officially declared a UNICEF Child Friendly City – the first of its kind in the UK.

Cardiff Council and its partners joined UNICEF UK’s Child Friendly Cities & Communities programme in 2017. To achieve Child Friendly City recognition, UNICEF UK lists three priority areas which city organisations must work towards:

- 1. Co-operation & Leadership:** People work together to make the city better for children and young people. They give children the opportunity to be involved in decision-making. All adult decisionmakers value the importance of incorporating children’s rights. They work together and have the skills to make this happen.
- 2. Communication:** All children and young people understand how they can find information they need – information about their rights and support that might make their lives easier, healthier, safer and happier.
- 3. Culture:** Children and young people should consistently enjoy interaction with city organisations' staff and people within their community who know and understand how to use a child rights-based approach to improve their work. People value and respect children and young people and know about and respect children’s rights.

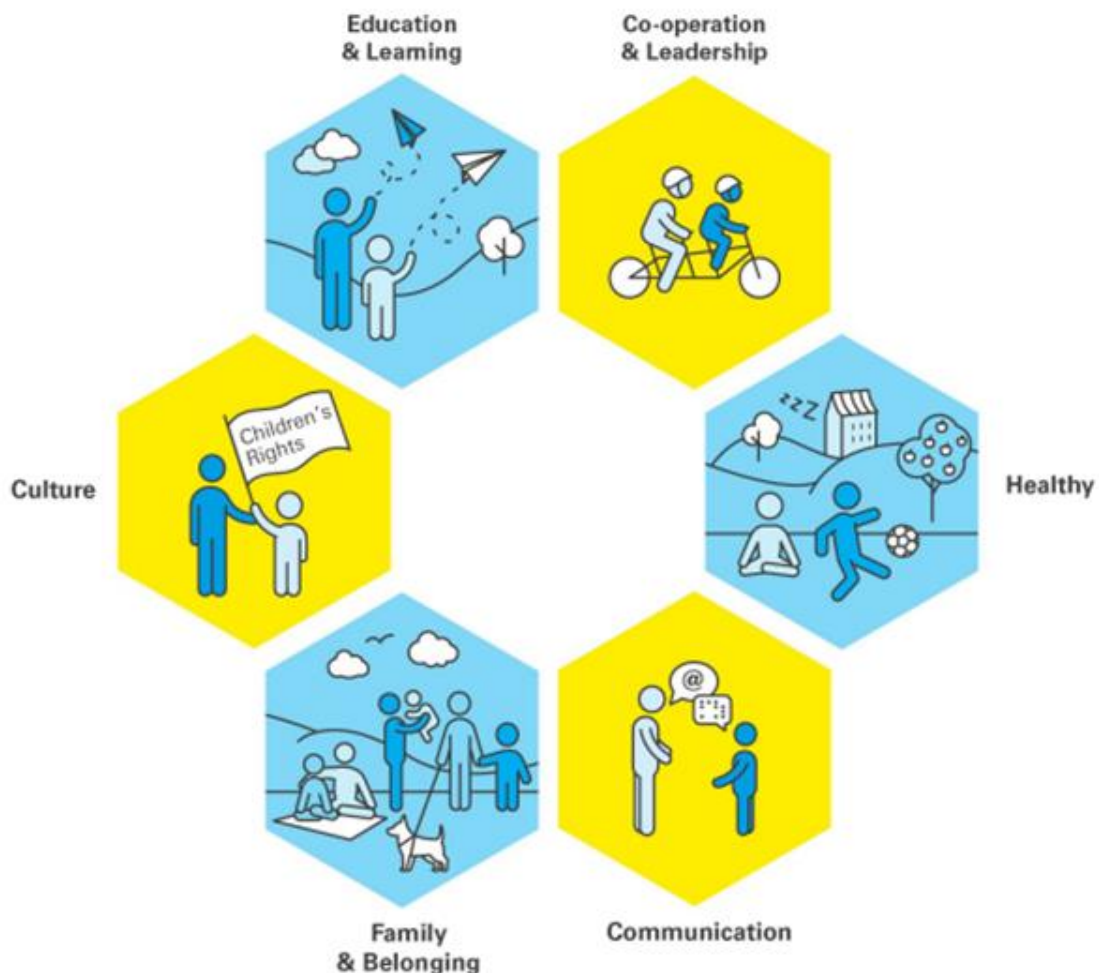


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Working with Cardiff's children and young people, the Council identified three further priority areas:

4. **Healthy:** Giving children the best start in life and getting it right for families in the first 1,000 days – from conception to their second birthday.
5. **Family & Belonging:** A place where all families are supported to be together and can enjoy activities around the city.
6. **Education & Learning:** Making sure schools embed child rights practices where the voices of young people are heard and acted upon. Children will leave school with the life skills they need to succeed, including the ability to make well-balanced decisions; manage personal finances; develop a healthy lifestyle; and maintain good social relationships.



These priorities were enshrined in Cardiff's Child Friendly Strategy in 2018. Since then, the Council has been implementing strategies to embed children's rights – as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child – into its policies and services.

At the start of 2023 for the final phase of the Child Friendly Cities programme, the Council submitted a self-assessment setting out the city's progress and achievements; an independent evaluation capturing children and young people's views on, and experiences of, the city's progress; a draft Sustainability Plan; and approximately 120 pieces of evidence in support of local impact.

The evidence demonstrated that the Council and its partners have made good progress across all six priority areas:

- **Strong and sustained commitment from city leadership**, including extensive elected member engagement training, and valued opportunities for children and young people to take part in scrutiny boards and other decision-making forums.
- **Increasing use of children's rights** to frame core local strategies, such as the corporate parenting, safeguarding and children's services plans.
- **Embedding consideration of children's rights** in the council's overarching impact assessment framework.
- **Establishing a permanent child rights unit**, a substantial commitment in economically challenging times.
- **Demonstrable commitment to making communications accessible** and child friendly.
- **Successfully advocating to the Home Office** and changing guidance to secure school places for children and young people seeking asylum.
- **Addressing barriers** that prevent some groups of children and young people from accessing services, including child refugees and children seeking asylum, care-experienced children, and children in 'education other than at school'.
- **Developing a suite of targeted support**, mentoring, resources and events for young people transitioning out of care, or out of non-mainstream education.
- **Empowering children with knowledge** of their rights at school by implementing the Rights Respecting School Award across two-thirds of the city's schools.
- **Establishing a Youth Health Board** to empower young people to influence local health policy.
- **Developing a holistic safeguarding referral protocol** for 16- and 17-year-olds attending accident and emergency services.
- **Enthusiastically championing children and young people** across the city and fostering an increased sense of belonging for children through child-centred festivals, play streets, story trails, and youth-led media.
- **Being accountable to children** by establishing a 'Young Committee of Experts' to understand the city's progress towards advancing children's rights from the perspective of children and young people.

Working in partnership with organisations across the city, a significant number of projects, initiatives and actions have been undertaken to ensure that children and young people are able to claim their rights, thrive and reach their potential, whilst addressing the barriers which may limit their life chances. Some of the highlights from Cardiff's journey towards becoming a UNICEF Child Friendly City are:

- **42,254 children and young people** have accessed early help and support since April 2019 via the new Family Support Gateway which is underpinned by child rights principles.
- **66,324 children aged 5-14** have accessed local authority play provision since April 2020.
- **73% of Cardiff schools** are working to embed children's rights as part of the UNICEF UK Rights Respecting Schools Award.
- **Over 700 opportunities** have been made available to children and young people to meaningfully participate in Cardiff Council decision-making.
- **50 teams of children** were engaged with to design new areas of the city through Minecraft Education.
- **2,785 children** have participated in design, monitoring and evaluation of Council services.
- **5,519 council and partner staff** have completed child rights training, and 3,595 children and young people have received participation and rights training.
- **More than 155,000 products** have been delivered to schools to support Cardiff's commitment to promote period dignity since March 2019.
- **19 streets helping to reduce traffic** at 22 schools have been made safer through the School Streets Scheme.
- **43 partners** have delivered hundreds of initiatives for young people in areas such as science and technology, arts and culture, and health and wellbeing to enrich their learning experiences within and beyond the classroom.

Watch our video here: <https://youtu.be/ZOxRWFtuYwk>

For further information contact:

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